

The Tree of Knowledge

Almost 60 years ago, the late Wendell Phillips, for many years a Duxbury selectman, wrote a brief history of the Tree of Knowledge. He was a building contractor who lived in Tarkiln.

At a banquet for his employees he presented each with a 4-page booklet. In it was a photo of the stagecoach and tree with the mailbox attached and a poem written by Mr. Phillips titled "The Tree of Knowledge." Here is his account of the landmark:

"Duxbury residents of the Tarkiln District have taken effective measures to avert the curse which tradition affirms will be upon 'North Bend' of the Plymouth-Boston road.

"In early Colonial days the 'Runner' between the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Plymouth was wont to leave messages or letters

for Duxbury folks at a large oak tree which stood in the junction of the 'Massachusetts Path' and 'The Duxbury Road.' The tree became known far and wide as the 'Tree of Knowledge.

"With the establishment of the mounted mail carrier a box was provided and used during all the years the mail stagecoach made its tri-weekly trips between Plymouth and Boston, thus inaugurating the first 'Rural Delivery' which continued until the railroad succeeded the coach. Tree and box finally went the way of all earthly things, when to one of the local patriarchs a spirit appeared and warned him, unless the site were continually marked a curse would be upon them. So for more than a hundred years, Tarkiln has maintained a sign in memory of the 'Tree of Knowledge.'"